



May 2011

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When we decide to do something about poverty, things can change

Standing at the table where bread is broken and wine is shared always challenges me. To approach the table with openness to God is not always easy. Often many things are buzzing in my head and doing all they can to distract me from what is a moment of true communion between me and my God.

Last month I found myself standing at the table in the beautiful Catholic Divina Providencia Chapel in San Salvador. I was there almost exactly 31 years on from when Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated at that spot. Oscar Romero, experienced the harsh reality of injustice, oppression and poverty in El Salvador. He saw and felt the scandal of poverty and responded – he responded to God's call to act justly and to love one another. Romero decided that it was not good enough just to talk about God's love. If God's love wasn't evident in the community around him he needed to act. He decided that to love God was to love the poor and oppressed – and he committed the remainder of his life to that work. He spoke out against the status quo and in so doing he was following Jesus. He did all he could to bring about the Kingdom of God. And at that very spot where I stood, at the table where we come to God each day or week, he paid the ultimate price. As he prepared to celebrate the Eucharist he saw a man raise his gun. Romero stood his ground and lost his life – but God's love cannot be stamped out, held down or stopped. Injustice and poverty is not in God's plan for His earth. Like Romero we don't have to stand by and allow the scandal of poverty and injustice to ruin the lives of God's children. We have the ability to stand firm and witness to God's unfailing love by doing something and doing it now.

With Christian Aid Week upon us you're probably expecting me to paint a picture of a world in desperate need of your charity. Yes – a billion people do live on less than a dollar a day. But in the past eight years the number of people dying from measles has dropped by 78%. Twenty-two of the poorest countries have cut their malaria rate in half, in just 6 years. In the 1980's 40,000 children were dying daily from preventable diseases, in the 1990's that dropped to 33,000 and now it is 21,000 – still a horrific number but a halving the number of deaths in a generation. In 1981 52% of world's population lived in extreme poverty, today it is 26%.

When we decide to do something about poverty things can change. We are a community of churches in England that has the ability to bring about change. But change doesn't happen by accident. Communities like ours, rooted in gospel values, make it happen. In England we have churches in every village, town and city that are caring for the wider community, bringing about change. By coming together in Christian Aid Week the ecumenical community in England is being the Body of Christ and bringing about change. When people from our churches go door to door in Christian Aid Week we are linking with communities around the world in over 50 countries and 600 partner organisations.

Take the example of Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the western hemisphere after Haiti, where 80% of the population live on less than \$2 a day. We work with Soppexcca, a coffee farming cooperative. In 1997 Christian Aid saw the potential of what they could achieve. From the humble beginnings we worked with 68 coffee producers, now we work with 650, benefiting thousands of families. They have purchased new processing equipment, and through a Fairtrade scheme are getting higher prices for their coffee. They now produce excellent processed coffee that is exported to Bewleys in Ireland and Tesco here in the UK. None of this work would have been possible if the people in our churches had not knocked on doors during previous Christian Aid Weeks. Martha features on one of the Christian Aid Week posters. She is a teenager in Los Alpes, one of the 18 local cooperatives that make up Soppexcca. Previously she used to have lessons in her uncle's front yard, and got soaked when it rained. Now because they are producing better coffee beans and processing them through Soppexcca they have been able to build a school and she and other children are getting a decent education.

There is much to celebrate and we at Christian Aid constantly remind ourselves that we are your aid and development agency. We are part of the church working with you to tackle poverty and injustice. This Christian Aid Week we are reminded that the churches, including those in Churches Together in England, have helped transform a community in Nicaragua resulting in new schools, pharmacies and clinics as well as stable employment for the coffee producers. Taking part in Christian Aid Week is an extraordinary thing. It's the largest act of Christian witness on the streets of Europe. It allows us to use our God-given gifts and stand alongside people in the poorest communities. It gives us a chance to be people who change the world.

And when I get frustrated and lose patience, when I want to ask the Lord, "Why is there so much poverty and injustice? What difference can we make?" I need to remember that the Kingdom starts with what we are prepared to do. Our small actions in a world of huge problems can make a wonderful, life changing and exciting difference. Indeed they already have made a difference in Nicaragua and elsewhere. So on behalf of our partners and of Christian Aid I would like to thank all the churches for your generosity, time and prayers. There is still much to be done, so may we commit ourselves afresh to give, act and pray so that however small our individual contribution, together we may continue to make a difference. And one day, in the fullness of God's plan for his kingdom, hunger, poverty and suffering will end, once and for all.

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Crushed But Not Destroyed

Revd Useni Sibanda, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, issued this Press Statement on Police Violence.

We, the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, hereby register and express our shock and disgust at the violent and barbaric attack on law abiding citizens by the police as they were praying for peace in the Church of the Nazarene in Glen Norah, Harare, on 9 April 2011. As an organization of Christians who believe that the Church has a responsible role to play in Zimbabwe, particularly in promoting peace we were directly involved, with other church groups and civil society organizations, in organizing this prayer service for peace whose theme was "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God" Matthew 5:9. The service was intended to be a commemoration of the 11 March 2007 prayer rally in Highfields at which church, civil society and political leaders were brutally assaulted and arrested by the police. This event led SADC to initiate meetings which resulted in the signing of the Global Political Agreement by the three leaders of Zimbabwe's main political parties and subsequently to the formation of the Inclusive Government. However, despite the formation of this government, politically motivated violence has continued to be the order of the day in Zimbabwe. The police, who are supposed to be the nation's peace-keepers have, on most occasions, refrained from arresting the perpetrators but arresting and even further assaulting the victims.

The congregation in the Church of the Nazarene is estimated to have been 600. Among them were 4 bishops and 36 respected pastors of various churches and denominations. As they were calling upon God to bring peace to our beloved Zimbabwe armed riot police, who were shouting obscenities, arrived and started to throw teargas into the church causing pandemonium among the surprised worshippers some of whom were women with babies, children and the elderly. This was a clear and shameful desecration of God's house. As worshippers rushed out of the smoke filled church, some by the door and others through windows, the police pounced on them and beat them without mercy. Many were seriously injured. In all 14 people were arrested and taken to Harare Central Police Station where they were charged with "causing public violence". After spending the weekend in police cells they were released and told that they would be called by way of summons. Nine of them were in pain and had to be taken for medical examinations and treatment. Two elderly members of Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, Bishop Paul Isaya aged 73 and Revd Paul Mukome aged 65, who are faithful servants of God were singled out, arrested and beaten thoroughly all over their bodies. They sustained serious injuries for which they are receiving medical treatment. The motto of the Zimbabwe Republic Police is *pro lege, pro patria, pro populo* or "For the law, the nation and the people". Their actions in Glen Norah are clearly in violation of their charter and motto.

This was a clear violation of freedom of worship, expression and association. Zimbabwean law does not even require churches to seek for permission before holding church meetings and services. It is regrettable that our law enforcer has become the chief law breaker. It is obvious that the attack on innocent worshippers the police were carrying out a partisan political agenda. We, therefore, call upon the ZRP to be non-partisan and to really serve the people of Zimbabwe as their motto says. We believe now is the time for reflection and reform on the part of the police. As Zimbabwe Christian Alliance we shall not be deterred from our just cause by any manner of violence or oppression. With Paul we say, "We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). We will, therefore, continue to pray and work for peace and justice as God commands. [Back to top](#)

Christ's last words unite Philippine churches

Philippine Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical churches united in reflecting on Christ's seven last sayings in a taped ecumenical radio programme that was aired on Good Friday. "This ecumenical activity is a realization of Jesus' prayer for His followers to be one. It also reminds us of our common Christian tradition, which should unite and not divide us," Revd Joie Galinato of the United Methodist Church told ENInews. Galinato will reflect on the words "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Christ's prayer for those who had condemned him to die on the cross. Good Friday commemorates the Crucifixion.

The radio programme has been led by the Baguio-Benguet Ecumenical Group, which works to strengthen ecumenical relations in this northern Philippine city, since 2007. The group has also, for 14 years, collaborated in observing the World Council of Churches and Vatican-led global week of prayer for Christian unity each January or February.

Catholic lay leader Reylita Calimlim, the ecumenical group's secretary, told ENInews that the radio programme is "a great witness of the unity of the various Christian churches, particularly in the Word." For Bishop Marino Inong of the United Church of Christ, the radio programme is "an avenue to reach out to more people ... as it is a witness of faith by the various churches." Inong reflected on the words, "I thirst," which Christ spoke from the cross. Fr. Andres

Cosalan, vicar-general of the Roman Catholic Baguio diocese, noted that the churches "share a common faith in Jesus and a common mission to share that faith." Cosalan reflected on the words, "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise," which Christ spoke to a thief who was also crucified. [Back to top](#)

Klingenthal Consultation

The third Faith and Order consultation between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), facilitated by the Institute for Ecumenical Research of the Lutheran World Federation, Strasbourg, took place at Chateau Klingenthal, France, on 13-15 April 2011.

The consultation heard reports about recent developments in international ecumenical dialogues, in the ecumenical scene in Scotland, in the CPCE and in the Anglican Communion. It looked at reports from the Church of England on *The Journey of Christian Initiation*, from the Church of England and the United Reformed Church on *Healing the Past – Building the Future* and from the CPCE on *Ministry-Ordination-Episcopate, Scripture-Confession-Church* and *Training for the Ordained Ministry*. It also received presentations on the Anglican Reformed tradition in the Seventeenth Century and the implications for Christian apologetics of recent work on science and religion

The participants agreed to recommend to their sponsoring churches that the British and Irish Anglican churches and the CPCE should work towards a memorandum of agreement. This would reflect the commitment of the participating bodies to the visible unity of the Christian Church and would also include some consequences that can already be drawn as well as an agenda for future joint work.

Those attending the consultation:

From the Anglican churches -

The Revd Canon Professor Paul Avis (The Church of England)
Dr Martin Davie (The Church of England)
The Revd Dr Michael Fuller (The Scottish Episcopal Church)
The Revd Gwynn ap Gwilym (The Church in Wales)
The Rt Revd David Hamid (The Church of England)
The Revd Dr Stephen Hampton (The Church of England)

From the CPCE -

The Revd Dr Stephanie Dietrich (Church of Norway)
The Revd Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE Office)
The Revd Fleur Houston (United Reformed Church)
The Revd Canon Harvey Richardson (Methodist Church in Great Britain)
Professor Michael Weinrich (EKD)

From the Institute for Ecumenical Research -

The Revd Professor André Birmelé
Professor Theodor Dieter
The Revd Professor Elisabeth Parmentier
Professor Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

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More international collaboration in theological education

Participants at a recent consultation on theological education at the Queens Foundation, Birmingham, have called for comprehensive Christian leadership development of both lay and ordained men and women in the church. Theological education is an organic part of Christian mission and thus presents a common challenge to all churches, according to the group of 25 representatives from international and local institutions involved in theological education, mission and scholarship agencies and regional ecumenical organizations.

The consultation, held from 6 to 9 April, was hosted jointly by the World Council of Churches (WCC), through its Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme, and for the Queens Foundation for Theological Education. The group issued a call to churches stating that there is an increasing need for theologically well-trained pastors, catechists and church leaders in many newly emerging churches within Evangelical, Charismatic or Pentecostal communities as well as historical churches from Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant backgrounds. The participants also recommended a reconsideration of the relationships between religion and development, theology and socio-political transformation, theological education and development agencies.

The call, which is titled **Agenda 21 for Common Collaboration in Theological Education – Findings of the Birmingham process**, said theological education is not confined to issues related to the inner maintenance of

churches but addresses the whole range of issues relevant for the socio-political context in which churches are operating. "Thus theological education contributes to social transformation, leadership capacity building and poverty reduction," the message said.

The message called on development agencies to review funding policies that have sidelined the work of the churches and their institutions for theological education. It recommended a "more explicit cooperation between development agencies and theological education". The so-called "Birmingham process in theological education", of which this consultation was a part, is open to additional participants from interested agencies, churches and networks. The process will be continued, as the consultation appointed a continuation group, according to Revd Dr Dietrich Werner, programme executive for the Ecumenical Theological Education work of the WCC.

The continuation group will look into appropriate next steps for providing appropriate international tools for networking and common platforms, particularly in the area of theological scholarship, e-learning, digital theological library resources and other issues of quality in theological education. Reports of the conference will soon be made available online. [Back to top](#)

2nd Global Gathering takes shape

At an important meeting in Istanbul, Turkey the Global Christian Forum (GCF) committee put into place final plans for the Second Global gathering to take place from the 4 – 7 of October, at Manado on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The central theme of the gathering is: Life Together in Jesus Christ, Empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some three hundred church leaders and representatives, comprising a 50-50 split between what could be conveniently called 'Evangelical' and 'Traditional' churches, have been invited. The makeup of the conference follows a set of principles used to ensure balance in representing the variety of world Christianity.

Two plenary sessions will work directly under the main theme, and out of it, a third plenary will intentionally, be Listening to What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches. As well as discussing changing trends, participants will listen to the experiences of the churches from across the world and will seek discern the further vision for the Global Christian Forum. The invitations include representation from Christian World Communions, Ecumenical organizations, Evangelical/Pentecostal/Charismatic organizations, Orthodox Patriarchates, the Catholic Church, Regional Councils, Conferences, Alliances or Associations, and Churches, covering all geographic areas and all traditions, mega churches and migrant churches. Participants will include both women and men, both young people and more experienced leaders. [Back to top](#)

10 years since the Charta Oecumenica

This year is the tenth anniversary of the Charta Oecumenica signed in Strasbourg on 22 April 2001 by the then presidents of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), Cardinal Miloslav Vlk and Metropolitan Jérémie Caligiorgis respectively, at the end of a European ecumenical meeting and a long path of dialogue involving all the European churches.

The Charta Oecumenica has no dogmatic-magisterial character, nor is it legally binding under church law (cf. Introduction to the Charta Oecumenica). Its realisation is left to the free reception by Christians in Europe. Nevertheless, CCEE and CEC recognise in this document a step and an important aid for the Churches to achieve together that call to unity which is at the same time an obligation for all Christians and a gift of God to be requested incessantly. The Charta Oecumenica is a continual process of construction which, in one way or another, has already marked the ecumenical journey of various church communities in Europe as testified by the numerous translations (more than thirty: from Arabic to Castilian, from Greek to Esperanto) and the scores of churches, communities, church associations and movements which have signed the document.

The penetration of the Charta Oecumenica into the European church and social institutional fabric is such that it is now also quoted in documents by lay institutions as testified by the frequent recourse to it on the part of PACE (the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) in its 25 March 2011 report on The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue (cf. doc 12553 nn. 93, 94 ff.) In order to celebrate this anniversary together, CCEE and CEC decided to collaborate in organising an ecumenical seminar on 9 May at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) organised by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in collaboration with the Christian Churches in Switzerland Community of work. Participants at the meeting included the two General Secretaries of CCEE and CEC, Fr Duarte da Cunha (CCEE) and Revd Prof. Viorel Ionita (CEC), and speakers included the Bishop of Nanterre (France), Mgr Gérard Daucourt, and Pastor Daniel de Roche, President of the Synodal Council of the Canton of Fribourg, in a round table discussion on accomplishments and challenges for ecclesial communion in Europe. [Back to top](#)

Cardinal Koch sounds “an ecumenical keynote” during Geneva visit

Cardinal Kurt Koch, who since July 2010 has served as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), has completed his first official visit to the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. Koch came as the guest of the WCC general secretary, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. The visit was an opportunity for the cardinal and Tveit to discuss significant and ongoing cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC.

During the 8-10 May visit the cardinal met with staff members from WCC programmes and with leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). The programme included a dinner with faculty and staff of the WCC sponsored Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland. Formerly the Catholic bishop of Basel, Koch returned to his native land to familiarize himself with the WCC and to discuss plans for future stages in the quest for Christian unity.

During a series of conversations he acknowledged the importance of “harvesting the fruits” of past dialogues among churches, confessional bodies and multilateral gatherings like those sponsored by the WCC. This “harvesting” was already an emphasis of his predecessor, Cardinal Walter Kasper. Reviewing historic agreements was a first step, to be followed by a deliberate process of “reception” of agreements in which individual churches and Christians are introduced to accords and insights achieved through dialogues, he said. Tveit said it is essential that such agreements “not be allowed to remain hidden treasures” but must instead be widely published and discussed in local settings.

In a discussion on the role of the WCC for the one ecumenical movement involving the general secretaries of WCC, LWF and WCRC, the general secretary of the LWF, Revd Martin Junge, noted the “interdependence” of multilateral conversations and bilateral dialogues. “Bilaterals” are one-on-one encounters between pairs of confessional traditions – as in Catholic-Anglican dialogue, Lutheran-Methodist dialogue or Orthodox-Reformed dialogue. “Multilateral” processes toward Christian unity, as often practiced through the WCC and its Faith and Order Commission, involve a wide cross-section of theological traditions. Junge described “multiple layers of engagement” among churches and confessional families, involving complexities of interpretation based on the specifics of regional and historical patterns of diversity. He called for “trans-contextual exchanges in which the polycentricity of Christian tradition may be better understood”. Admitting that partners in dialogue find themselves “at a complex table,” Revd Dr Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the WCRC, said that apart from the diversity of Christianity, there was a broad range of issues and areas that the churches are learning to address cooperatively. It is not enough to focus on the academic or purely ecclesial aspects of theology and doctrine: “Faith and Order, justice, peace, advocacy, service – all belong together!”

Junge and Nyomi expressed gratitude for the role of the WCC in “convening” diverse churches and related bodies at a common table. Tveit expressed his hope that the honesty and moral courage involved in difficult dialogue is leading to “thick relationships” rather than the “thin” relations fostered by less ambitious encounters among Christians. “Ethical disagreement can threaten unity,” said Tveit in regard to the risks of a frank exchange. “But when we do achieve ethical agreement on matters of justice and peace, leading to common action, that is when we build thick relationships.” Koch was accompanied on his trip by PCPCU staff members Monsignor Gosbert Byamungu and Fr Gregory Fairbanks.

During a meditation at Tuesday morning prayer in the Ecumenical Centre chapel, Koch observed: “In today’s world, Christian witness must have an ecumenical keynote so that its melody does not sound cacophonous but symphonic. Within ecumenism therefore there is something far more important than any aim of ecclesial politics: The daily renewal of the maturing process of the essential, namely a faith which is realized in love.”

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The People’s Bible

When King James VI of Scotland and I of the United Kingdom held the first printed copy of the Bible he commissioned in his hands in 1611, he could never have foreseen the impact it would have around the world. Many of our ancestors learned to read from the King James Version and in lots of cases came to a relationship with God.

The Scottish Bible Society is marking this important anniversary by launching The People’s Bible Project with its colleagues in England and Wales. It will travel Great Britain offering people of all faiths and none the opportunity to handwrite two verses of Scripture and at the same time logging that work as a digital copy which they can view on the web. They want people to engage with the Scriptures in a new way, maybe for the first time. Some may participate purely for the historical significance of doing so. Others may get involved because they know the Bible but have turned away from the faith they once had. Whatever the reason, 2011, the 400th Anniversary of the KJV, gives us a perfect opportunity to promote the Bible in our own country like never before.

The People's Bible will be in London on June 20, Southend-on-Sea on June 22, Chelmsford and Colchester on June 23, Ipswich on June 24, Norwich on June 29, Tynwald Day Fair, Isle of Man, on July 5-6, Metrocentre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on July 10, Sunderland on July 12, Middlesbrough on July 17, Blackpool on July 30, Manchester on August 1, Polzeath, Cornwall, on August 3, Newquay on August 5, Plymouth on August 6, Liverpool, Southport, Barnstaple and Land's End on August 8, Exeter on August 9, Taunton on August 11, Tiverton on August 12, Poole on August 13, Bournemouth on August 18, Weymouth on August 23, Southampton on August 24, Cheltenham on August 26, Guernsey and Jersey on September 5, Hull on September 15, York on September 16, Leeds on September 18, Sheffield on September 20, Lincoln on September 22, Nottingham on September 24, Leicester on September 26, Peterborough on September 28, Bedford on September 30, Northampton on October 2, Carlisle on October 4, Whitehaven on October 6, Derby on October 8, Coventry on October 10, Birmingham on October 13, Wolverhampton on October 16, Shrewsbury on October 19, Bristol on October 23, Bath on October 27, Swindon on October 29, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Reading on October 30, Oxford on October 31, Cambridge on November 2, Worthing on November 5, Portsmouth on November 6, Basingstoke on November 7, Brighton on November 8, Eastbourne on November 9, Canterbury on November 13, and Westminster Abbey on November 19.

For further details, see www.thepeoplesbible.org

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Sarum College Launches Art Programme with The Word Exhibition

Sarum College launches its new initiative in the visual arts on 2 September 2011 with an exhibition entitled, The Word – A Reflection on the King James Bible. The new arts venture will form an integral part of Sarum's academic programme, which offers a range of courses on theological and spiritual aspects of art, aesthetics, imagination and culture. It will include two major exhibitions every year, with plenty of opportunity in between for local schools and local artists to show their work. It will also be linked with that of Salisbury Cathedral, displaying the drawings of sculptors exhibiting their work there.

Sarum College's first exhibition departs from those events celebrating the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible (KJV) which focus on its language and literary merits. Before widespread literacy and the availability of the Bible either in English or in print, its stories were told through stained glass, sculpture and engravings. With this precedent for spreading the Word through visual art in mind, Sarum College will be filled with works in sculpture and lettering on stone, glass and fabric by artists including Peter Eugene Ball, Frederic Chevarin ARBS, Zoe Cull and Alex Evans, Robyn Golden-Hann, Elizabeth Herkströter, Giles Macdonald, Mary Noble (calligrapher), Suzanne Redstone ARBS, Tracey Sheppard FGE and Roger Stephens.

Each exhibit is a unique reflection on the cultural importance of the KJV and its contribution to society through Christianity. The Word exhibition ends on 19 December 2011. The next major exhibition is The Art of Healing, which begins in January 2012 to coincide with the publication of a history of Western art in hospitals by the critic Richard Cork, who will open the event.

"Good art speaks to everyone," says Maggie Guillebaud, associate chaplain at the College. "As part of the divine process of creativity, reflecting on the Christian message in the context of creativity can be a profoundly spiritual process, as well as one which stretches and challenges our preconceptions about the world." Guillebaud, a former member of the Arts Council of England and chair of the South West Arts Council, is developing Sarum's new arts programme with Curatorial Consultant Rachel Bebb of The Garden Gallery in Hampshire and Christine Nielsen-Craig, director of communications at Sarum College.

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Making Connection Diaconal Conference

This unique two-day conference will bring an exciting opportunity to explore historical and contemporary diaconal ministry with an excellent range of international and ecumenical speakers, including Dr Paula Gooder, Dr John N Collins, Revd Dr Maurice Staton, Revd Canon Professor Paul Avis and Deacon Eunice Attwood.

The conference will be of interest to deacons, church leaders, academics, those involved in training deacons, and anyone interested in critically exploring the renewed interest in this ministry and its potential contribution to the wider Church and society.

The programme will run from 10.30 am on Thursday 8 September to 3.30pm on Friday 9 September and will cover a range of engaging topics such as:

- The nature of diakonia and its relationship to the role of a deacon.
- The development of diaconal ministry in both historical and contemporary contexts.
- The reconstruction of the diaconate and ecumenical dialogue.
- The relationships between different ministries (both lay and ordained).

- Learning and dilemmas within contemporary diaconal practice.

These topics will be explored through keynote addresses, presentations, interactive and creative workshops, and small group discussions. In the final session, conference participants will be invited to ask questions and give feedback to a select panel. The conference will also explore and discuss emerging findings from a recent ground breaking two-year study into diaconal research Good Practice in Diaconal Ministry in the Methodist Church of Great Britain which is being carried out by Dr Andrew Orton.

As part of the programme, Dr John N Collins will give an open lecture at 7.30 pm on Thursday evening titled The Ties that Bind: Deacons today in the light of yesteryear. The lecture will address the diversity of a deacon's role across the ecumenical spectrum.

The conference will be held at St John's College in the historic university city of Durham. The college is situated on South Bailey, opposite the magnificent Norman Cathedral, which has been designated a World Heritage Site.

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/st-johns.college/conference/location/>

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RE and English Baccalaureate

Senior Church Leaders from across West Yorkshire are writing to all the region's Members of Parliament, urging them to sign the cross-party Early Day Motion 1375 which calls for the inclusion of Religious Education among the core academic subject of the English Baccalaureate. The Government's model for the English Baccalaureate in schools encourages students to consider five academic subjects, chosen from a shortlist which does not at present include academic Religious Studies. Yet, as the church leaders' appeal states,

RE can provide the tools necessary to understand all the major faiths, the diversity of our society, and the complex issues involved in integration and building harmonious communities...

Furthermore,

RE is essential for understanding the historical and literary basis of this country, and for the underlying ethical code upon which our society is based.

Early Day Motion 1375 calls for the inclusion of RE among the core academic subjects of the English Baccalaureate. It has cross-party support, reflecting the breadth of public concern about this issue. A number of West Yorkshire MPs have already signed, and the church leaders' letter is encouraging the other MPs to add their support. [Back to top](#)

MyCommunitySpace

MyCommunitySpace is the only online premises resource designed for the community and voluntary sector. Visit www.mycommunityspace.org.uk if you are interested

- a) in hiring a space in your local community to hold an event
- b) have a space you want to promote for hire
- c) need specialist advice and support in managing and maintaining community buildings

The website currently has over 700 premises for hire. Why not maximise the use of your building and advertise yours? MyCommunitySpace is completely free to use and all you need to do is register your details online.

Benefits of promoting your space online include we have hundreds of registered people searching for space daily, you can upload photographs and also add your email address to receive booking enquiries directly via the website! Take the hard work out of marketing and promote your space online. [Back to top](#)

Forgiveness: Simple Truths; Complex Realities

Julie Nicholson, whose daughter was killed in the July 2005 London bombings, will speak about forgiveness at a public meeting of Postscript to Theology Quest and Questions at Sarum College in Salisbury's Cathedral Close at 7pm on Thursday 30 June.

"As a parish priest the idea of forgiveness was part of my life and work. I prayed for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, and stood at the altar to pronounce God's forgiveness on the congregation. But to be honest I'm not sure how deeply I'd thought about what forgiveness meant beyond the theory and theology," Nicholson says. "Then on the 7th of July 2005 my 24 year-old daughter Jenny was killed at Edgware Road tube station as she travelled to work. She was blown up along with 51 other people by four suicide bombers."

Nicholson is the author of *A Song for Jenny* and an ordained priest in the Church of England. Her career has spanned nursing, teaching, directing and more recently writing and broadcasting. Until 2005 she was priest in charge of an

East Bristol parish. Following the death of her eldest daughter, Nicholson stepped aside from parish ministry and is now working as a freelance writer and writing a second book. Tickets on the door, £7 including a glass of wine/soft drink. Arrivals at 6.30 for 7pm start.

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Liquid Church at Bexhill-on-Sea

The sun was shining and the atmosphere was charged with excitement as 140 Interdenominational Christians gathered together in The Heart Space at Bexhill High School for a day themed with the name IDENTITY 2 DESTINY.

The flow of the day was prophetic Edge - Spirit Led Worship, Inspiration, Healing, Empowerment, Release, Creativity, Cake, Christian Community & stalls. Hosts: Paul & Talitha Ishi-Smith from God's Greenhouse were joined by guests: Arianna Walker - Mercy Ministries, Birgit Whelan - Revelation TV, Dave Roberts - Author, Helen Rubio - Key of David, Jonathan Bugden - Integrity Europe and Julie Hall - Snowdrop Music. With a complimentary lunch there was time to mull around and enjoy many stalls ranging from art, funky clocks, books, CDs, a tent for healing, charities and an informative mix of what's on in the local Churches of Bexhill on Sea. Throughout the day people enjoyed 100 large bottles of complimentary water from Tesco's which was very much appreciated as it was very warm!

FEEDBACK: "As you said this has been some "incubation", but what a delivery, UNBELIEVABLE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
"Blessed beyond all expectation! Completely & utterly BLOWN AWAY! The songs, the singing, the musicians - absolutely stunning & amazing! As they say follow that! Still up in the clouds!" "This event was fantastic. The Holy Spirit of God was with us 100%. Thanks to all who made it a great day." "Thank you for ALL you did on Saturday, it was quite radical for those of us who thought we were! Both testimonies were heart rending but you have proved Abba's faithfulness! HE is Rising up from coast to coast!" "Fantastic, inspirational speaking that really impacted my life! Can't wait for the next one!" "Raw, testimonials have made it possible for me to talk about my past and give it to Jesus! Thanks for being so vulnerable." "I am so glad we came! This has been good for Bexhill!"

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New Christian-Jewish Partnership for Visits to Israel

The [Apostolic Pastoral Association](#) (a Black Majority Christian network) and social network site Travelujah.com have announced their agreement to form a marketing partnership for visits to Israel. A co-branded "Holy Travel" e-newsletter will be distributed to millions of interested subscribers who can register at www.travelujah.com. As part of the launch the organizations are offering new subscribers the chance to win a Holy Land Pilgrimage Tour.

[Travelujah](#), an Israel-based company, is a unique social network focused on fostering a deeper Christian connection with faith through Holy Land tours. People can learn, plan and share their Holy Land experiences with other Christians worldwide using over 600 pages of in-depth content, user and expert blogs that take you off the beaten path, as well as travel programs for groups and individuals.

For more information, please contact Bishop (Dr) Doyé Agama, St John's Rectory, Railton Terrace, Moston, Manchester M9 4WE ☎ 07511216772

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LEPs and Baptist Pension Fund

All churches in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) should recently have received a Pension Bulletin dated March 2011. This document explains the current situation of the Baptist Ministers' Pension Fund (BMPF) in relation to the major review of the Pension Fund carried out over the last two years, and the problems that have been identified due to the government regulations around defined benefit pension schemes. Churches, including LEPs, are encouraged to engage with this document, which is available to download from the [BUGB website](#) entitled 'BMPF Employer Communication – 2011'.

The major issues which ecumenical colleagues should be aware of are around 'cessation events'. For the purpose of pension provision, Baptist churches (including single congregation LEPs with Baptist participation) are considered employers. If a Baptist minister who is a member of the BMPF has been 'employed' by a church since 2005, has since left, and has not been immediately replaced with another member of the BMPF, a cessation event is deemed to have occurred – i.e., the employer (the church) is deemed to have left the Pension Scheme. Under pension regulations, that employer should then pay a share of the pension deficit as shown by a valuation of the scheme. This could, potentially, be a very large sum. BUGB has been working hard with the Pensions Regulator and the Pension Fund Trustees to find ways through this problem, and these negotiations are ongoing.

This is, necessarily, a very much simplified explanation and we would encourage you to read the full explanation in the BMPF Employer Communication.

BUGB has recognised that the situation of LEPs is of particular concern due to the increased likelihood of there being a long gap between ministers who are members of the BMPF. Indeed, the rotation of ministerial denominations in LEPs is one of the strategies considered important for ecumenical growth, and so a long gap between Baptist ministers is to be valued. We are anxious that difficulties with pensions arrangements will not put Baptist ministers at a disadvantage in working in LEPs, that Baptists will not be put off joining an ecumenical partnership because of these issues, and that LEPs who have a Baptist minister do not find themselves facing excessive additional burdens.

There are three main points arising from the BMPF Employer Communication which LEPs and those advising them should be aware of:-

- Firstly, LEPs will need to pay higher pension contributions towards the 2010 Pension Fund shortfall (as detailed in the BMPF Employer Communication) in the same way as other Baptist churches. We recognise that in some cases this will mean LEPs continuing to pay contributions to the BMPF when they are also paying contributions towards a minister of another denomination. Unfortunately this is a legal requirement which we are unable to allow LEPs to opt out of.
- Secondly, if an LEP has had a Baptist minister who is a member of the BMPF since 2005 and that minister has now left, technically there is a 'cessation event' issue in the same way as for other Baptist churches. However BUGB has recognised that there is an unfair situation regarding LEPs where it is much more likely that there will be a period longer than a year before another member of the scheme ministers at the LEP. Negotiations are proceeding with a view to ways of mitigating the consequences of this circumstance. More information will be provided as soon as possible, though this is not likely to be before the autumn.
- Thirdly, if an LEP with a Baptist minister in the BMPF is imminently moving on or retiring, the church should apply for a 'period of grace' as detailed in the BMPF Employer Communication. This gives a year's space before a 'cessation event' occurs. During that time the LEP should contact staff at Baptist House for advice on whether an 'interim minister' who is part of the BMPF needs to be appointed.

We are aware that these are unpleasant facts, and will be unwelcome news in many LEPs. BUGB is committed to helping churches through the issues and will be glad to help with any concerns you may have. Please direct any questions to Philip Putman via bmpfenquiries@baptist.org.uk.

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Aspire is Transforming Lives through Work

Aspire is a community enterprise, limited by guarantee with charitable aims in Bristol. Its management team is made up of committed Christians who are passionate about seeing young people trained, equipped and encouraged to face the next step toward permanent employment and meaningful inclusion in society.

Aspire have three main areas of business: Window cleaning, painting and decorating and gardening. They are happy to receive work from either residential or commercial customers, either on a contract basis (monthly, bi-monthly etc) or as a "one off" service. Some of their regular customers include Second Step (painting and decorating) and The Salvation Army (gardening and window cleaning).

The young folk (trainees aged 18-25) spend 6 months with them and are trained in one of four areas (the three mentioned above and administration). Six months may not seem like sufficient time, but we often see remarkable changes (confidence, self-discipline, an improved work ethic etc.) during this time. The trainee's wages are funded by Government and the team leaders, office staff salaries and overheads are paid by income generated from their customers.

Some of the young people have a background of drug and alcohol abuse and suffer from low self esteem which often (always?) accompanies this lifestyle. Some of the team leaders themselves come from disadvantaged backgrounds, homelessness (rough sleeping), alcohol abuse and long term unemployment etc. Their goals are therefore to sustain (and on occasion create) permanent employment, to train, equip and encourage young people, whilst providing a quality service at affordable prices.

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Ministry and outreach to non churchgoing Catholics

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales has just had a day conference about evangelisation. Captain Jim Currin, Secretary for [Evangelisation](#) at Churches Together in England was invited to be an ecumenical guest. Here are his notes, observations and a personal reflection on the day.

The keynote address (Hear the full talk [here](#)) was from Fr Christopher Jamison who became well known as Abbot of Worth on the Monastery TV programme. He is now Director of Vocations for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. His main points were:

- Familiar phrases like 'lapsed Catholic' have negative connotations. A positive (more affirming) alternative he prefers is 'resting Catholic'. He said 'we all know it's okay to rest!'
- We need to look at 'purpose before pews' – evangelisation is not a numbers game. 'The Son of God did not come to earth and suffer the crucifixion just to get people on a seat'.
- Many people are content and feel no need for church. The 'usual suspects' of consumerism and individualism are less a factor for this than three big factors which affect how people see themselves and the church. They are:
 1. Busy - which gives a sense of importance, and 'too busy' for church
 2. Happy – even though on the 'pleasure treadmill' of work/leisure with the paradox of what we seek and find. Fr Christopher said, 'we are not designed to feel good all the time'.
 3. Spiritual - young guests on Aled Jones Sunday breakfast show often say they are 'very spiritual' but not religious. People pray and say 'spiritual' because they see that there is 'more to life'.

Our task is to help people find purpose and God's love e.g. through 4M's:

1. Meditation - help people find 'sanctuary' and silence, in small groups or church open in the week
2. Music – especially if accompanied by explanatory leaflet of spiritual meaning
3. Meaning to life – who they are and who God is – by Christians who listen
4. Mass – but, he said, don't start by asking people to the Mass - rather 'Help people have communion with Christ outside the Mass before inside'.

I attended two seminars:

1. KIT means 'Keeping in Touch' scheme where 'resting' Catholics are sent a letter by their Parish Priest. This is followed up by visit by member of KIT team trained to listen, take prayer card, church information and invite to social or study group. www.kit4catholics.org.uk
2. 'Landings' is a small group scheme where 'returnees' (e.g. 2 people) meet with trained group of 'welcomers' (e.g. 6 people) who hear each others story. Each week (i.e. 8 weeks) for 1½ hours in a pattern of welcome, prayer and hospitality, one person tells there story and every one else agrees to listen and thank and comment on how this helps them. www.landingsUK.org.uk

Things I noted

- The monk who taught at Monastery school and said, 'evangelisation - that's the only reason why I teach'.
- The priest who prayed about his next ministry in retirement and felt called to minister to non church going Catholics. Recognised by diocese as 'MAC'- 'Minister to Alienated Catholics'.
- Overheard a Catholic priest talking about the street evangelisation he and a team had been involved in.
- Several times I heard (e.g. both workshops attended, Fr Christopher and Alpha) the emphasis on small groups as a key to evangelisation today.
- The present and last Pope talked about 'new evangelisation' to people of no faith at all.
- People often think they are 'vaccinated against religion' but 'to be spiritual we need to be religious' (Fr Christopher speaking to audience of 300 at Edinburgh Festival book fair said this and heard audible 'boo' when he made this point - even though he felt his comments about spirituality well received before that!)
- Several dioceses have well established teams to help parishes with their evangelisation programmes e.g. Brentwood, Hexham and Newcastle, Northampton and Portsmouth (called pastoral formation)
- SION is a community of people who do missions in schools and parishes, as well as Soul in the City and other community mission events.
- The Maryvale Institute in Birmingham run both a Certificate and Diploma course in Evangelisation and Ministry. www.maryvale.ac.uk

Resources seen

- Alpha in Catholic context. www.alphafriends.org/catholics and quote on introductory DVD 'For the disciple of Christ to evangelise is an obligation of love' Pope John Paul 11
- Caritas social action network which brings together a wide network of agencies and projects.
- Papal visit legacy leaflet about knowing our 'purpose' and growing in confidence www.thepapalvisit.org.uk/legacy
- 'Life4seekers' booklet www.life4seekers.co.uk 'for people in search of truth and authenticity'
- 'Wednesday Word' – children's activity leaflet based on Sunday Gospel reading, distributed through schools on a Wednesday for children to go through with their parents. www.wednesdayword.org
- The Tablet newspaper articles about evangelisation and 'returnees'
- Come home for Christmas campaign: www.comehomeforchristmas.co.uk
- 'Knowing God better', 'Believe – reflections on the Creed', and Life to the full: bringing the Bible alive' and other resources from CaFE – Catholic Faith Exploration www.faithcafe.org

- Catholic Enquiry Office and Home Mission Desk resources c/o www.catholicchurch.org.uk

A personal reflection

It was said that about 2/3rds of the Catholic community who have been baptised are not attending church – which equates to 4-5 million people in the UK. This phenomenon is not unique to the Catholic Church as many churches have members who do not attend. All churches would do well to think of how to reach such people, especially if they have been ‘vaccinated against religion’. The resources of Rob Parsons and ‘Care for the Family’ re the ‘prodigals’ and Andy Frost re ‘rediscovering faith’ come to mind - as well as the national initiatives like Back to Church Sunday and the ‘Everybody Welcome’ material from the Church of England.

The question is ‘what are we inviting people back to?’

There was some discussion on Saturday about the suggestion of Fr Christopher that, despite its centrality for the Catholic faithful, the Catholic Mass was probably the last thing to invite people to as that is ‘not where people are’ yet. He affirmed that it should be where we hope to lead people to, but questioned ‘when?’ Across all church traditions is the observation that small groups are important as well as some ‘experience’ of the good news. This chimes in well with Jesus and the disciples which I have been writing about in ‘The 360 Gospel of Jesus’ (www.jesus360.org.uk), as well as the well known observation that people often ‘belong’ before they ‘believe’.

Having said that though, this is all at odds though with high attendance figures for Christmas and Cathedrals, where people like to attend – perhaps especially if they perceive a particular personal need and like to be anonymous. ‘Mystery worshippers’ research across a wide variety of churches has found that, when paid to do so, the researchers actually enjoyed their church experience and (surprisingly) found the sermon a good thing. Added to this the 2007 Tearfund research found that nearly 3 million people would be happy to be invited to church if asked.

So where does that leave us? I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 9: 22 ‘I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some’, which suggests a ‘both/and’ approach of small groups and Sunday worship as ‘all possible means’. What we have to do – and which Saturday’s day conference illustrated well – is to re-emphasise that all that we do needs to be done well and with the visitor in mind who might want to find out more about the life and love of Jesus Christ. This sounds straight forward, but if taken seriously the implications - and the possibilities - are quite enormous.

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Resources at Sheldon

The Society of Mary and Martha, Sheldon, Dunsford, Exeter EX6 7LE (01647-252752 : www.sheldon.uk.com offers a variety of resources in its beautiful setting.

Rambling with God Walking mindfully. Reflective gathering of the inner and outer experiences of each day. 4th – 8th July. £290. Open to everyone, 20% ministry discount.

Clergy family holiday weeks Friendly and relaxing. Fully catered. Explore the local area. Evening activities on site. August 7 – 13 and August 14 – 20. Indoor accommodation nearly full but still plenty of camping space.

R5 – read, retreat, rest, relax, recuperate Come for all or part. Use however you wish. From £32/night. 30th May – 5th June, 15th – 22nd July, 20th – 31st August, 25th – 30th September, 13th – 18th November. Open to everyone.

Lodges, Pig Pens and now Hen Runs Lots of spaces for private retreats, open to everyone. Self-catering or stocked larder. Own front door. Grounds, chapels, library. 1:1 time for people in ministry. Emergency bolt-hole or restorative space.

Enneagram – through personality to spirit Part one introduction, taught in the oral tradition by Karen Webb. Draw on resources of sacred tradition to learn your unconscious habits and perceptions and fuel spiritual development. 4th – 6th October. £270 residential. 20% ministry discount.

The Touching Place Learn a variety of short massages to share with the important people in your life. Develop attention, caring, presence and awareness. Book in pairs. 7th – 8th November. £170 residential. 20% ministry discount.

Telling Tales Story is the shortest route between truth and the human heart. Come and learn some of the tools of the trade and experience its transforming power. Simon Airey. 8th – 10th November. £200 residential. 20% ministry discount.

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1MAK - one million acts of kindness

The aim is to share, map and inspire people and community groups with the great stories and acts of kindness that are happening right across the city of Birmingham. 1MAK Birmingham was launched this Easter to coincide with the time when Christians mark that great act of kindness – Jesus Christ, laying down his own life for us!

1MAK Birmingham will run initially from Easter 2011 to Easter 2012. This will be a year when it is hoped people will continue to be inspired to make a difference in their neighbourhood right across Birmingham. They want to encourage as many people as possible to visit the [website](#), log their acts of kindness, read what others are doing across the city and send the details onto their friends.

The Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, said "For this city to remain a haven of refuge and safety, a centre of creativity and commerce and a meeting place for faiths and cultures it needs people who are committed to being good news, people who gossip hope and live friendship and hospitality. Acts of kindness are the nerve cells of this city. Kindness creates connections in a way that nothing else can. Kindness builds community and ends loneliness and isolation. St John says that "Perfect love casts out all fear." Kindness is the opposite of fear and it speaks of the love God has for every one of the 1 million people who share the city of Birmingham and call it home." [Back to top](#)